

Toms River Regional Schools 2023-24 Budget- Goals/Considerations

Budget goals/considerations:

1. General: Develop a budget for 2023-24 with no overall reductions in staff positions, programs or co-curricular offerings. Note that ESSER/ARP grant funding and stabilization aid **if awarded** in 2022-23 will help stabilize the district's finances through 2023-24, but absent a change in the state aid situation and/or allowable tax levy increase (or something else unforeseen), **we must continue to prepare for a fiscal cliff in 2024-25.**

2. Revenues:
 - Taxes- we are required by law (S2) to increase our tax levy 2% again for 2023-24, and for 1 more year thereafter. For 2023-24, the 2% increase on \$168,142,351 equates to \$3,362,847.
 - State Aid- the anticipated reduction in State Aid for 2023-24 (year 6/7 of S2) is \$2.7 mil per the NJASBO calculations, but it may be substantially higher or lower as each year NJ DOE adjusts the local fair share via the per pupil adequacy costs and the mysterious multipliers. We are awaiting notification as to whether we will receive any stabilization aid in 2022-23, which could have a huge impact on the 2023-24 budget as well as the 2024-25 budget. At this time only minor adjustments are expected to be made to the Extraordinary Aid and the non-public transportation reimbursement aid budgets for 2023-24.
 - Reserves- in 2022-23, we utilized \$1.0 mil. in maintenance reserve funds and \$9.05 mil. in surplus, for a total of \$10.05 mil. For 2023-24, we should plan to step this down in total as such a high level is not sustainable going forward.
 - Other revenues- continue to seek alternative revenue sources to help fund the budget.

3. Expenses:
 - Personnel- given the ESSER/ARP grant funds and possibly stabilization aid, we should be in a budgetary situation whereby we will not have to reduce staff positions in total, although as usual, positions may be reallocated to best meet the needs of the district.
 - Curriculum- planning to fund the most critical items in the multi-year plan, and do our best to support existing adoptions and initiatives already in place.
 - Co-curricular (including athletics, student clubs, bands, etc)- planning to fund existing sports and clubs.
 - Technology- per the multi-year plan, will continue to budget for the replacement of the 8th year lease which will be paid off in 2022-23 (principal amount of 750,000). Note: 5-year bar has already been built.
 - Transportation- per the multi-year plan, will continue to budget for the replacement of the 3rd year lease which will be paid off in 2022-23 (principal amount of approximately 1,400,000, with current plan to purchase 13 big buses- but the final number may be less as bus prices have increased sharply). Note: 5-year bar has already

been built. We will also be focusing on route development and tier times, and trying to ensure athletic and co-curricular busing is covered, as well as possibly late runs.

- Special education- ensure we budget enough to provide for required programs and services. The resources needed continues to grow significantly year after year, and even throughout the year.
 - Facilities- provide adequate funds for routine maintenance and repair needs.
4. Debt Service Fund- there is no budget cap implication as this is not under the general fund budget, but the debt service tax levy should remain stable. We will continue to use referendum interest and capital reserve dollars, totaling \$1 mil combined, until we reach the 2025-26 budget, whereby we will see a sharp decrease in the tax levy for this fund as a bond series will be paid off